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THE

BANNER UNFURLED:

A SERMON

PREACHED AT THE DEDICATION

OF THE

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ON PENN SQUARE,

PHILADELPHIA,

DECEMBER 31, 1842.

~~~~~  
BY THE

REV. WILLIS LORD,

PASTOR OF THE CHURCH.  
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PHILADELPHIA:
WILLIAM S. MARTIEN.
1843.

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REV. AND DEAR SIR:—The undersigned, members of the session of the church, respectfully request a copy of the Sermon preached at the dedication of the Church on Penn Square, on the evening of the 31st of December, 1842, for publication. The request is made from their own conviction of the benefit that may be derived from its publication, as well as from the frequent and urgent solicitations made by the members of the Congregation to see it in print.

Very Respectfully and Affectionately Yours,

OTIS AMMIDON,
N. POTTS,
JAMES DUNLAP,
THOMAS KERR.

PHILADELPHIA, January 18, 1843.

TO THE ELDERS OF THE PENN SQUARE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

DEAR BRETHREN—The following Discourse is submitted, at your request, for the press, with the single remark;—that its occasion and design required only *statement*, not *illustration* or *discussion*; and in the hope, that, in some degree, however slight, it may subserve the cause of truth and Christ.

Yours in Christian Affection,

W. LORD.

DEDICATION SERMON.

PSALM XX. 5.

"We will rejoice in thy salvation, and in the name of our God will we set up our banners."

A.S.R.
25
14.15
Bour
You cannot regard the occasion on which we are assembled, my brethren, other than as one for mutual congratulation and joy. Under the kindly fostering care, as we believe, of God, we have been led onward to the successful accomplishment of an enterprise, which, at any time, would be thought of no small magnitude, but which, in the present period of general embarrassment and distress, may well excite our unfeigned admiration. With a most happy unanimity of feeling and purpose we have been enabled to prosecute our work, with an unwearying constancy and vigour, from the laying of the corner-stone, until now the completed superstructure stands in its simplicity and beauty; reflecting honour alike on the taste and genius of the architect, the fidelity and skill of the builders, and the noble liberality of those who have furnished the means for its erection.

We come to-night to set it apart for God. In the overflowings of a gratitude, which we hope has been kindled from heaven, we come to consecrate it to the worship and glory of *Jehovah—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.*

The costume of the text, and the Psalm from which it is taken, is military. On whatever occasion it may have been penned by David, or sung by the congregation of God's ancient people, it is obviously and impressively applicable to the Church under the present dispensation; and will

remain thus applicable to its close. For we have no expectation, my brethren, that the now militant hosts of Jesus Christ will be permitted to put off their armour, or even to repose on their weapons, much less to wear the crown and shout the pæans of victory, until another dispensation shall be ushered in by his advent in glory. The hope that looks for the Church to emerge from depression and conflict, before her King shall come in the majesty and might of the God-man, we deem, from the known attributes of human nature, and the disclosures of the word of God, unauthorized.

And what is thus true of the Church collectively, is true of individual churches and individual believers. There is imposed on every Christian, and on every community of Christians, the necessity of maintaining an antagonist position—an attitude of defence and aggression with reference to the world, the flesh, and the devil; and this necessity will continue until the Church enters upon her millennial triumph and reign with her Lord.

Recognizing this, my brethren, as our position, we here, “in the *name of our God, set up our banner;*” that, as its sacred folds spread themselves on the breeze, both angels and men may read the inscriptions that adorn it, and know our character and our aims. Not indeed that it is altogether unknown whom we serve, or in which great division of “the sacramental host,” we exercise our warfare; but in the circumstances in which, through the loving kindness of God, we now are, it is especially proper that we should re-assert with distinctness, though with brevity, the great principles and purposes which characterize and actuate us as a Church—and for the maintenance and diffusion of which we have reared, and come now to consecrate and occupy, this beautiful temple.

And remark, what we deem of incalculable moment—that *in the name of our God*, we set up our banner. Oh,

it were a poor ambition, nay, it were a crime, if we sought here any unholy rivalry with others of the Lord's hosts—or coveted any unholy distinction. No, in the name of our God—for the glory of our God—in imploring dependence on the grace of our God, we set up our banner. May it never be sullied by the breath of bigotry, or exclusiveness, or unhallowed self-seeking. And may it never be betrayed by unfaithfulness, or cowardice, or treason. If we abide steadfast to our distinctive preferences and principles—as, by the grace of God, we will—it shall be in loyalty to the Great King, and in affection to all who love Him. If we bear a hostile front, it shall be only to the enemies of the Lord.

But we will *unfurl* our banner; and, as it floats before you, we beg you mark the inscriptions which it bears, indicating collectively—our *polity*, *our creed*, and *our spirit*.

I. And first is this—

The Bible—the word of God, indispensable, infallible, and sufficient. We distinguish ourselves in this from the adorers of *unassisted reason* on the one hand, and the devotees of huge *tradition* on the other.

If the self-styled rationalist impugns the necessity or divinity of the Scriptures, we simply reply, (for we are here now to define our position, rather than to defend it) that there is little difference in our estimation between the intellectual lethargy or moral obliquity of him, who, in view of the actual condition of men without it, and of the crowding attestations of prophecy, miracles, and holiness to its heavenly origin, can say, “There is no Bible;” and of him who can go forth, beneath the glorious firmament, when the sun cometh from his chambers rejoicing, or the moon and stars shed down their mellower light, and say, “There is no God!”

The celestial volume is before me, bearing on every page the indelible impresses of its origin and author. In its light,

the glimmerings of nature are lost, as the stars vanish before the sun. To its illuminating and ennobling influence it is owing, that reason has now attained to so elevated and sublime a position; to a comprehensiveness and energy never before reached. Emerged from the twilight of nature, and the darkness of superstition, and sitting in the clear radiance of this revealed wisdom of God, why should she not exert her powers with a certainty, and scope, and grandeur of result, evincive of attributes glorious and even god-like!

Or if the traditionist demands whether we reverence not the accumulations, written or unwritten, of patristic lore, we reply—*not at all, as authority*. We indeed revere the fathers, as we do other good men. We admire the virtues, which, by the grace of God, any of them exhibited. And we value their writings, so far as we have them without interpolation and incorrupt, as acquainting us with their opinions, and the opinions of their age; but with us they are of *no authority*. The canon of divine revelation was completed by him of the Apocalypse, and the malediction of God impends over his soul who presumes to add to or diminish from its embodied testimony. In the unequivocal declaration of the Holy Ghost—"the law of the Lord is perfect—able thoroughly to furnish the man of God unto all good works, and to make wise unto salvation."

It will be ours then, in this sacred place, ever to recognize and maintain the *absolute supremacy and sufficiency of the word of God*. We declare our utter, and heaven aiding us, our irrevocable hostility to every attempt to elevate reason or tradition, or the consent of the fathers, or that fascinating fiction which is called the voice of the church, to a co-ordinate honour and authority with this volume from heaven. As the rule of faith and practice it shall be enthroned here, *infallible, sufficient, and alone*. We will proclaim it to the old and young, to the illiterate and the

philosopher, to the Christian and the heathen, as God's *perfect word*:—

“Star of eternity! the only star
By which the bark of man can navigate
The sea of life, and gain the coast of bliss
Securely!”

And regarding it thus, we will maintain the unrestricted right, nay, the imperative duty of every man, to study its wonderful pages for himself. It has been sent by God to the people, as well as to the priesthood, and every restriction imposed on its universal circulation by ignorance, or superstition, or wicked ambition, is an atrocious crime which God will fearfully visit. Free as the balmy air, free as the glorious light, let it spread the world around!

II. But see, our waving banner discloses another inscription upon its folds.

The Principles and Institutions of Presbyterianism.—And sure we are that no generous mind, however it may differ from us on this point, will be displeased, either that we cherish or that we avow an unfeigned and sacred attachment to these. It is our honest and profound conviction that they are essentially and truly apostolic.

Let us, however, be understood. We not only do not believe in the divine right of kings, or of prelates—who in our estimation have no right at all as prelates in the church of Christ—but we do not believe in the divine right even of Presbyterianism, so as to exclude or invalidate all other forms of ecclesiastical polity. There is no where given in the New Testament, that charter of our privileges and hopes—a specific and detailed account of what may or may not enter into the external constitution of the Church. We have on this point here and there a few facts—and here and there a few precepts; and so far as from these we can obtain the model of the Apostolic church, we think it demonstrably Presbyterian. Its officers, designed to be permanent,

were the Bishop, or Presiding and Teaching Elder, the Ruling Elders, and the Deacons. And the Bishop was the Pastor and Teacher of a single congregation. No one had the precedence in official rank or authority above another. The entire structure of Diocesan or Prelatic supervision and power, is the offspring of later and degenerating times, unapostolic, and unscriptural. The Apostles indeed were invested with extraordinary powers, and their office was extraordinary, limited to, and ceasing with, themselves. Or if, as some are even bold enough to affirm, they had or have successors in official rank and powers—let such but show us the *signs* of an apostle, and we will at once do them becoming reverence.

But while these are our unwavering convictions, we cordially recognize the various evangelical churches of the Protestant communion, as true churches of Christ. The defects or redundancies which may characterize the organization of any of them, do not, in our belief, affect their substantial integrity. We recognize their ministers as appointed by the Great Head of the Church, and their members as brethren and fellow servants with ourselves in the house of God. We rejoice in all that they accomplish for the glory of our common Saviour. We look upon ourselves and them, as component parts of the one army of the Lord. We are arrayed against the same enemy. We are equipped with the same armour. We are animated by the same hope. There awaits us the same victory. We expect to inhabit the same heaven in eternal harmony and love.

But the *institutions* of Presbyterianism, as well as its principles, are inscribed on our banner. The Apostolic church in its constitution and character was essentially missionary; and the instrumentality by which it effected its benevolent designs, was within and amenable to itself. Then the church alone was *the* organization for spreading through the world, the knowledge and blessings of Chris-

tianity. And it was wonderfully efficient and successful. Perhaps no succeeding age, in her history, has witnessed such labours and such results, in the cause of Christ, as signalized the first. In like manner our own beloved Church, carrying out her principles, has called up within and amenable to herself, instrumentalities for the same great purpose of diffusing the gospel. Her declared position before the world is that of a missionary Church—not merely in her individual members—but in her organized and official character. And herein we rejoice; yea, and we will rejoice. Her institutions for this end, have our cordial attachment; they shall have our cordial, we hope vigorous, support. If, however, in this also, others prefer, as others do, a different mode of benevolent operations, we will cheerfully bid them God-speed in their labours, and pray for their abundant success. Or if there must be strife between us, we insist that it shall be the strife of holy emulation and love.

But I hasten to direct your view to

III. A third inscription which now reveals itself on our banner as it floats aloft in the breeze:—

The Doctrines of the Reformation.

The great element of that glorious event, was a return to the incorrupt truths of the Gospel. For ages previous, the human mind had been whelmed in darkness and corruption. The incubus of error, and a withering superstition pressed upon it with paralyzing power. Enfranchised himself by the truth and Spirit of God, Luther boldly, and every where, proclaimed the Gospel. Like the blessed beams of breaking day, the light spread from mind to mind, and the Church, and society itself began anew.

It is interesting to notice to what unanimity of result men will arrive, when their great object is truth. It is even marvellous, when we remember the prejudices, errors, and corruption in the midst of which they had been reared, that the Reformers should, so almost at once and unanimously,

have embraced all the fundamental principles of the Gospel. The triunity and perfection of God—the native and entire corruption of man—atonement by the alone and vicarious sacrifice of Jesus Christ—regeneration, or the radical moral transformation of the heart by the direct and efficient power of the Holy Spirit—justification by faith alone in the imputed and perfect righteousness of the Son of God—the covenanted and eternal conservation of believers—the everlasting blessedness of the righteous and wo of the wicked—all these are truths, coeval with the revelation of God—stamped with deep impress on every page—and which the Reformers with one heart declared fundamental in the system of redemption.

We appreciate these great doctrines as did they. For their maintenance we have reared this house, and now consecrate this pulpit. We believe that their truth and triumph involve the highest glory of God and the supreme interests of men. With this conviction we love to trace their diffusion and results in connexion with spiritual religion and civil liberty. We are unable to believe that their uniform connexion with these is merely a fortuitous connexion. We regard them as the cause, of which these are the effects. Philosophically it must be so; historically it has been. Mark those glorious revivals with which in other days God has blessed his weary heritage, and tell me what truths were they which electrified men—which prostrated them in deep self-abasement before God—which brought them in holy grief to the cross, and there enkindled in their souls the hope and joys of heaven.

Or would you test the other term of our declaration, and mark the connexion of these truths with the civil enfranchisement of the race? We care not whether you consult Hume or Clarendon; whether you visit the Islands or the Continent. The record is unvarying and brilliant. For a century and a half the genius of the Reformation assumed

the guardianship of liberty for the English world, and it constitutes the brightest period of its history. In Switzerland, in Holland, in Geneva, in glorious old Scotland, in even more glorious New England, throughout the Republic, wherever the principles of the Reformation, which are simply the principles of the Bible, have gained the ascendancy, and in proportion to their prevalence and power, they have invoked intelligence and freedom for the people—they have given dignity to office—energy to law—vigour to government—security and prosperity to all; and to preserve and perpetuate the priceless blessings, they have planted, side by side, in every parish, the Church of God and the common school.

We repeat it—for the maintenance of the doctrines of the Reformation this temple has been reared, and this pulpit is devoted. And especially, in these passing times, when there are signs in the heavens of appalling portent, when deep darkness seems to us gathering over the hopes of man; when the Genius of Liberty stands weeping and trembling for the result of the coming and dreadful conflict; when religion herself seems almost as if retiring, in sorrow, from the earth; in these times, we shall feel it solemnly incumbent on us, to speak with no ambiguous voice; to speak, if with the courtesy and tenderness, so also with the fidelity and fearlessness of an ambassador from God.

IV. One inscription more we have wrought in the texture of our banner, which now unfolds itself to view:—

The Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Without love, my brethren, we are nothing. That essential grace, which the Scriptures declare essential to the constitution of individual Christian character, is equally essential in the collective Church. The whole, whether in number or character, is but the aggregate of the parts: as are the one, will be the other.

Let us seek then to be baptized afresh, with the Spirit of Jesus. This baptism will constrain us to love one another.

The harmony in which we have dwelt together, and in which we enter upon a new stage in our history, will remain unbroken, nay, it will be more firmly established. This beautiful house will become the habitation of the heavenly Dove. The ministrations of the Gospel here, will be made glorious, by the visible tokens of its power and success. The ordinances will be precious to the saints, and attended with such manifestations of Jehovah's grace that we shall be constrained joyfully to cry—"Surely this is none other but the house of God, and gate of heaven!"

But we have placed this inscription on our banner, especially to indicate the feelings we cherish, and which we intend to cherish, with reference to others. In the name of our God, we have set it up; in the Spirit of his well-beloved Son, we will endeavour to uphold it. We count His friends our own—though they be not called after our name. We declare that we have a sincere affection for all who love the Lord, whether Episcopalian or Independent, Wesleyan or Immersionist, Old School or New. The things in which we agree, are the great things pertaining to salvation; those in which we differ, are of subordinate character, and ought not to interfere with mutual confidence and esteem. And though some may have mistakenly thought, because so they have been told, that ours was a spirit of bitterness, and an attitude of war, we are here holding in our hands the olive-branch of peace, and invoking upon our souls the pure breathings of the Holy Ghost. If we cannot always approve, if sometimes duty may compel us to censure, by the grace of God, we will never hate; nay, by the grace of God, we will ever love!

Thus, brethren, we have set up our banner. May it stand for ever, fair and beautiful, and free; and around it gather a multitude of youthful soldiers and hoary veterans, manfully and Christianly doing warfare beneath its sacred folds, until the Lord shall come.

Let us now make our offering. We have built this house

for God. In the presence of this beholding assembly—in the presence of invisible spirits, peradventure of the just made perfect, and of the angels that have come forth from the glorious throne—to God, let us now with one heart and one voice offer and consecrate it.

PRAYER.—O God—King immortal and invisible—self-existent and perfectly blessed—dwelling in light inaccessible and full of glory—behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee, how much less this house which we have built! But thou dost stoop to the children of men; thou dost graciously accept the offerings of thy servants. To Thee, in gratitude and with joy, we dedicate this temple.

O God the Father, first subsistence in the tripersonal Godhead, and source of all blessings:—

O God the Son, glorious similitude of the Father, King in Zion, and Redeemer of men:—

O God the Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son, spirit of love and author of holiness:—

Triune Jehovah, three subsistences in one God, we consecrate this pulpit, this audience-room, this entire edifice, to thy service, worship, and glory. In the name of Jesus Christ, the crucified, accept our offering.

Here wilt thou graciously dwell, O God the Father! Here wilt thou multiply the trophies of thy love, O God the Son! Here wilt thou exert thy power to save, O God the Holy Spirit! Here may the gospel be preached with fidelity and success. Here may the supplications of thy people be heard, and return in blessings on their souls. Here may the young come to the Saviour. Here may the mature in life find durable riches and righteousness. Here may the aged prepare for heaven. And when this voice is silent, when the hands that have reared this house are cold in death, when all who now occupy these seats are no more

with the living, still may a holy flock crowd this temple, and the sacred succession last unto the glorious appearing of the Lord! And to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, will be immortal praise. Amen!

My brethren, we have made our offering. This is the house of God! But, alas! while we have been thus engaged in its consecration, time with noiseless step has been rushing on. We stand upon the verge of the dying year. Impressive admonition, that we who have reared this sanctuary, who have watched its progress, whose anxieties and hopes have been concentrating here, yea, that we all are passing away; that earth, with its many pleasant things, is not our abiding place; that eternity, with its overwhelming scenes of glory or of gloom, will ere long break upon us. Beloved hearers, are you prepared for heaven? As life's brief span thus hastes away, are you engaged in the great work for which life is bestowed? Ah, how many in this assembly forget their souls, and forget eternity! How many live, as if not born to die! as if this world were all and for ever! Oh, thou careless, yet immortal soul, awake at length to the awful peril in which thou art; to the appalling gloom which gathers over thy future way; to the certainty which awaits thee, of everlasting destruction, unless thou dost soon come, penitent and believing, unto Jesus Christ! Delay not until to-morrow! Let the closing moments of the expiring year behold thee prostrate at the cross! Let the opening hours of the new year, if they may be thine, behold thee in holy and eternal allegiance to the Lord! Then, though time be no more, and the earth melt in the final fires, thou shalt have a "building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens!"

DESCRIPTION

OF THE

PENN SQUARE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

THE novel, impressive, and beautiful style of architecture, which characterizes the Penn Square Presbyterian Church, having attracted the notice and elicited the admiration of many of our citizens, who have already classed it as one of the chief ornaments of the city of Philadelphia, we annex the following description of the Building, as an item of history, and of expedition in Church building worth recording, and which we presume will be found interesting to most, if not all, of the readers of the foregoing discourse.

The church building stands upon a beautiful site, furnished with abundance of space, light, and air, on all sides, and is situated on the east side of Broad, above Chestnut street, opposite to the beautiful open city square, called Penn Square, in honour of the founder of the state of Pennsylvania, as well as of the city of Philadelphia.

The principal façade on Broad street, consists of a Corinthian portico, resting upon a rusticated basement, and is approached by a noble flight of thirteen granite steps—the columns are so disposed as to surround a part of the massy foundations intended for a steeple. The walls and flanks are embellished with pilasters, the whole supporting a dentelleated entablature, and enriched with ornaments peculiar to classical architecture. The principal story is finished in an elegant and chaste style, the architecture being in strict harmony with the exterior. The pulpit presents an imposing appearance; it rests upon a basement of four feet in height, supporting a screen of four columns, with a rich entablature extending to the ceiling. The pews both above and below are lined, and those below well cushioned, with rich light coloured damask. They are of ample capacity to hold from eleven to twelve hundred persons, and are comfortably spacious both in length and width. The church has three aisles, and is so well arranged that an ordinary good

voice will fill it with perfect ease, and the sight is equally well gratified in every part of the house.

In the basement are a comfortable Lecture-room, capable of accommodating about three hundred persons, and capacious Sunday School rooms.

The whole building, both within and without, is a beautiful specimen of chaste and elegant architecture, and its plan, workmanship, decoration, and furniture, are in beautiful symmetry and harmony. The execution of the different parts, reflects great credit on the Architect, the Contractor, and the several artificers engaged in the execution of the work.

The edifice was designed by, and erected under the direction of, N. Le Brun, Architect; Andrew D. Caldwell being the Contractor and Builder. The whole was constructed in the remarkably short space of seven months, in the best manner, and of the most approved materials. The length of the building, including the Portico, is one hundred feet; the part occupied as the audience chamber is eighty feet deep by sixty-seven feet wide.

On the 1st of January, 1843, being Sunday, the Church was regularly opened for divine worship. In the morning, the Rev. Mr. Lord, the Pastor, preached from 1 Cor. i. 21. "For after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God," &c. In the afternoon, the Rev. Prof. J. W. Alexander, of Princeton, New Jersey, preached a very eloquent and appropriate sermon to an overflowing audience from Matthew xviii. 20. "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."—In the evening, the Rev. Mr. Boardman preached an impressive discourse from Psalm cxxii. 1. "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord," to a crowded audience.





